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ABSTRACT

Education has entered the age of accountability. Whether this phenomenon represents a new dimension or increased emphasis upon a long-standing tradition, the fact remains that the public and its representatives are now looking more frequently and more critically at higher education and demanding more evidence of performance and effectiveness. While the initial thrusts of the accountability movement focused upon faculty, administrators and even students, it has become clear that governing and coordinating boards will also be called to account. As with any kind of evaluation, there is a need for explicit criteria. In addition to providing for systematic evaluation, such criteria could be valuable to the boards themselves as guidelines for improving effectiveness. Related issues are: (1) evaluation of structure versus evaluation of performance; (2) evaluating board performance in the 1970's and 1980's and (3) planning and effectiveness. (Author/KE)

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# EVALUATION OF STATEWIDE BOARDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION*

Patrick M. Callan

It is now a truism that education has entered the age of accountability. Whether this phenomenon represents a new dimension or increased emphasis upon a long-standing tradition, the fact remains that the public and its representatives are now looking more frequently and more critically at higher education and demanding more evidence of performance and effectiveness. While the initial thrusts of the accountability movement focused upon faculty, administrators and even students, it has become clear that governing and coordinating boards will also be called to account. In several states, for instance, dissatisfaction with the performance or the structure of state level boards or both has already led to reorganization of state systems, abolishment of boards and commissions and establishment of new ones. Clearly there is a tendency for legislators, governors and others charged with protecting the public interest in higher education to look to the top of the organizational pyramids in their continuing efforts to assure public accountability. Thus the issue of evaluation of state boards of higher education is particularly timely and relevant.

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evaluation, such criteria could be valuable to the boards themselves as guidelines for improving effectiveness. Yet the problems of developing rigorous and systematic criteria are enormous. They include

--Lack of consensus about the goals of higher education--including the roles that state boards should play with respect to those goals

--Lack of any established relationship between the effectiveness of an educational enterprise and its structural and management components

--Differing expectations of boards on the part of the various internal and external constituencies

--Changing expectations of boards caused by the emergence of new problems and issues in higher education

--Differences in structure, functions and powers of the boards from state to state--ranging from consolidated governing boards to the regulatory, advisory and voluntary coordinating boards.

Despite these obstacles, evaluations of boards occur frequently. Every time a bill calling for a change in board powers or membership is introduced in a state legislature, whenever master plan studies include governance within their scope, whenever states reevaluate their constitutions, some kind of evaluation follows, based upon some mix of educational, political and fiscal considerations. However, the

criteria are seldom made explicit and the absence of articulated criteria increases the liklihood that the implicit criteria will be primarily political.

Structure Versus Performance

In recent years evaluations of state boards have been initiated primarily by governors and legislators and rarely by the boards. Triggered by discontent, most of the evaluations focused on the structure of state systems and attempted to identify and remedy systemic weaknesses. The outcomes have sometimes led to drastic reorganizations.

Periodic reevaluations and structural overhauls are essential to the health of all organizations and state systems and boards of higher education are not exceptions. Yet it is important to be cognizant of the possibility that structural tinkering can be a poor substitute for analysis designed to explore potentials for more effective performance within the existing organizational framework. It is often assumed that deficiencies in the operations of state systems and boards are systemic, and this assumption is not infrequently encouraged by board members and their executive officers. It is easy to yield to the temptation to attribute inadequacies to factors beyond one's control instead of facing the prospect of painful adjustments of procedures and personnel. In addition, structural reform has an

understandable appeal to governors and legislators frustrated with their state boards, because reorganization is one of the few mechanisms available for relatively rapid and direct change.

The intent here is not to deny that drastic reorganizations of state systems are sometimes required or that there is a relationship between the structures of state systems and the effectiveness of state boards. But there is a need for a type of evaluation which does not begin with structure or even with the de jure powers of the boards. It is important that explicit criteria for evaluating the structures of state systems be developed; but it is equally important that some indicators of effectiveness which do not assume that failings can or should be remedied by reorganization be formulated. The two types of evaluation should be conceptually distinct, though one may lead into the other and there may be overlapping elements.

The need for distinct sets of criteria is illustrated by one of the most thorough assessments of alternative state structures which has been undertaken in recent years, that of the University of Missouri Task Force on State Level Coordination and Governance in Higher Education (Martin, 1972). The Task Force reviewed state level governance in fifty states and conducted in-depth case studies in nine states. The criteria utilized in the evaluation are listed in

Table 1. The nine case study states to which the criteria were applied included representatives of the various patterns of governance and coordination-- advisory and regulatory coordination and consolidated state governance.

The case studies and the conclusions derived showed that in the most substantive areas of the evaluation--program control, resource allocation and long-range planning--environmental factors which were not related to structure were most significant. It seems reasonable to conclude from this study that an evaluation framework which is oriented primarily to structure is less than adequate for assessing effectiveness if effectiveness in critical areas is not primarily a function of structure. While some of the criteria would undoubtedly be helpful in both types of analysis, the overall usefulness is limited.

The remaining sections of this paper will attempt to describe some characteristics of evaluation criteria relevant to the effectiveness of state boards and to suggest one indicator of effectiveness which may serve as a foundation for the development of a broader framework.

## Evaluating Board Performance in the 70's and 80's

One tentative step towards the construction of a systematic conceptual framework for evaluation of state boards

Table 1
Criteria for Evaluating Structures for Coordinating and Governance of State Higher Education

General

1. Program Control - Ability to establish sound pattern of institutional missions; to distribute programs among institutions in educationally sound and efficient manner; and to discontinue old and establish new programs in a rational manner.

2. Resource Allocation and Use - Ability to define fiscal needs on a coordinated and responsible basis in relation to specific institutional missions and overall staff needs. Includes consistency to budget development and presentation procedures, efficiency and effectiveness of procedures, and control and evaluation of application of resources.

3. Long-Range Planning - Ability to conduct continuous and meaningful long-range planning for higher education in the state for all postsecondary institutions and to implement the resulting plans.

4. Assignment of Responsibility - Ability to identify responsibility and accountability for conduct of higher education at institutional and state level. Includes an appropriate differentiation between responsibilities for broad policy establishment and management within policy guidelines.

5. Comprehensiveness of Purview - Degree to which structure for coordination and governance permits and encourages coordination among all segments of postsecondary education, including the private and community junior college sectors.

Influences

6. Institutional Autonomy and Influence - Ability of institutions to maintain individual educational character, to exercise appropriate control of own operations and approaches to assigned programs, and to bring institutional and educational considerations to bear in state-level decision making affecting higher education.

Table 1, continued

7. Lay Representation - Degree to which representatives of the lay public of the state participate in coordination and governance of higher education.

8. State Government Influence - Degree to which state government, executive and legislative, can influence development of higher education in concert with other programs of the state, while encouraging integrity and continuity of the higher education enterprise.

Administration

9. Span of Control - Degree to which coordinating and governing bodies and staff thereof are able to act on the basis of an adequate familiarity and understanding of the individual operating units and institutions for which they are responsible.

10. Costs of Bureaucracy - Degree to which staff and other dollar costs of the structure for coordination and governance can be kept at a level consistent with the overall requirements of the activity.

11. Processes of Bureaucracy - Ability of structure of coordination and governance to operate with the minimum necessary paper flow, review levels, and related attributes of bureaucratic processes.

12. Responsiveness - Ability of institutions and of coordinating structure to maintain the flexibility of operation required for timely and efficient response to specific needs and requirements.

13. Agency Staffing - Degree to which nature and responsibilities of coordinating or governing bodies permit the attraction of appropriately qualified staff.

Source: Report to the President of the University of Missouri from the Task Force on State Level Coordination and Governance in Higher Education

is the identification of some general indicators of board performance. These indicators should

--relate to problems and issues facing higher education at a particular point in time; for just as different eras require different types of executive leadership, the style of board leadership should also change in response to changing circumstances

--deal with functions common to the various types of state boards

--be process--rather than product--oriented; that is, the indicators should not prescribe a set of substantive policy outcomes for all boards in all states but should instead be concerned with the ways policies are developed

--be modest in that no direct relationship between the functioning of boards and the ultimate purposes and effectiveness of higher education is assumed [neither should it be assumed that no such relationship exists]

In the context of these requirements it is necessary to look at current and prospective issues confronting higher education and to attempt to determine the appropriate type of response by state boards.

It is clear at this point that the conditions of the late 1970's through at least the mid-1990's will differ

markedly from those of the immediate post-World War II period and particularly the 1960's [Carnegie Commission, 1973; Boyer, 1973 and 1974; Glenny, 1973; Kerr, 1973]. The most dramatic changes facing higher education are a diminished participation rate of high school graduates and a falling birth rate which is already being felt in the elementary schools. Thus the era when the major function of state boards was to seek ways to accommodate rapidly growing numbers of high school graduates seeking college admission is over for most states. In addition, the emphasis upon accountability and performance discussed above, and competing societal priorities such as early childhood education, environmental concerns and health care delivery have altered the climates for higher education in the halls of state government. A poor job market for many graduates with bachelors degrees through doctorates has caused skepticism on the part of government officials and many potential students with respect to the value of higher education. In addition, there is evidence of new demands for what has been called non-traditional education, a term which includes the servicing of new clienteles often at new times and places and utilizing new strategies and technologies for learning, evaluation and certification.

What are the implications of these conditions for state boards of higher education?

First, the problems of presiding over growth, of allocating rapidly growing resources among institutions and programs are being supplanted by problems of scarce resources and the allocation of cutbacks. The loosely defined priorities of the era of growth will give way to better defined objectives and priorities. Boards will face difficult decisions involving funding some programs and projects at the expense of others and eliminating old programs to generate resources to begin new ones.

Second, those boards having program and budget review functions will be forced to become much more rigorous in their evaluations with respect to both new and existing programs. More and better data to justify programs and expenditures will be demanded by the boards as they are forced by the legislative and executive branches to support their recommendations.

Third, boards which fail to come to grips with state/internal priorities will find those decisions made for them by governors and legislatures.

Fourth, state boards will be expected to take up the issue of non-traditional study, to provide recommendations to the states on the desirability of public commitment to these programs and the methods of financing, and to referee the competing claims of institutions to the nontraditional "market." It may also be necessary to recommend in some

states that new institutions devoted exclusively to non-traditional learning be created, a decision unlikely to be popular with established colleges and universities.

These implications represent only the tip of an iceberg. Beneath the surface related problems and issues are lurking--including collective bargaining, growing proportions of tenured faculty, volatility of student interests from year to year within the colleges and universities, and the difficulties of generating funds for experimentation and innovations when core programs face financial stringency. All of these issues suggest a more activist role for state boards in the years ahead. For while administrators, faculty and students will grapple with many aspects of them, legal and political requirements will make their resolution impossible without the actions of state boards.

The problem, then, is to identify functions or processes common to state boards which relate to their effectiveness in meeting these challenges. The contention of this paper is that there is one function which cuts across the diverse forms of governance and which is basic to the performance of all boards and state systems--that of developing state plans.*

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*State planning or "master planning" for higher or postsecondary education has been defined by Glenny and his colleagues as "the identification of key problems, the accumulation of accurate data about those problems, the

Up to the present time, higher education planning has addressed the issue of growth. At the state board level, the master plans of the last fifteen years have had as their primary objective the orderly and efficient accommodation of enrollment increases. The present and the immediate future require a different type of planning which focuses on the qualitative problems of maintaining and improving dynamism, quality and diversity without extensive growth. The need for planning at both the state and institutional levels will be greater because the policy options will be more difficult and sensitive. The danger of making each choice an ad hoc decision instead of viewing it in the larger context of a plan is that policy direction will flounder and that short-term considerations and political expediency rather than well thought out educational considerations will predominate. A plan provides some assurance to the public, governors and

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analysis of their interrelationships, the extrapolation of future alternatives that might emerge out of present conditions, the assessment of the probable consequences of introducing new variables, the choice of the most desirable modified alternatives as the basic goals, a sequential plan for implementing the desired goals and a built-in feedback system for periodically reevaluating the goals selected and the means used to achieve them. A master plan is the cumulative integration of the plans produced from a series of special (cyclical) planning efforts." [1971, p. 30] While all state boards have responsibility for planning, the scope of those responsibilities varies as does authority to implement plans. The appropriate implementation authority is a matter of some controversy. See, for instance, Carnegie Commission, 1971; Folger, 1974; and Millett, 1974, p. 36.

legislators that recommendations of the state boards are predicated upon more than opportunism and to institutional constituencies that while they may not always agree with board decisions, policies established by the board are not arbitrary.

Boards that commit considerable energy and resources to planning are more likely to have a clear sense of priorities from which strategies for guiding state systems through a difficult era can be derived. Boards that develop effective planning processes are more likely to be cognizant of the concerns and aspirations of their internal and external constituencies. And boards that place heavy emphasis on planning are likely to be better aware of their needs in filling key staff positions, particularly in the selection of chief executive officers.

In addition to providing a context for specific policy decisions, such as program and budget approval, the planning process can be utilized as a mechanism for self-renewal of state systems of higher education [Boyer, 1973; Palola, 1970, pp. 547-62]. Planning can lend itself to the raising of fundamental questions of purposes, policies and priorities in a way that other managerial functions which are more concerned with maintenance and custodial responsibilities cannot. By the same token, planning can provide opportunities for proposing innovations. And planning can provide a

forum where educational needs, as perceived by institutions and multi-campus systems, and societal needs, as perceived by the public and its representatives, can be thrashed out and reconciled or compromised.

The argument here is not that planning by state boards is a panacea. Nor does planning make difficult decisions less painful, particularly to those who see themselves as hurt by them. Planning by a state board is in itself a precarious process. It can be easily abused by persons or groups who are not committed to it. And it can fall under the influence of parochial interests if great care is not taken to avoid this possibility. It can be used to introduce greater rigidities instead of flexibility and responsiveness. Nevertheless, the dangers of not planning exceed these potential pitfalls. For the alternative would seem to be lack of direction, short-term expediency and political interference. In short, while planning does not guarantee that a state board will be effective, the lack of planning makes effectiveness improbable.

If planning is an essential ingredient of effectiveness and a basic element in the evaluation of state boards, what criteria should be utilized in assessing planning? The Carnegie Commission has developed a "checklist of planning considerations" (Table 2) which describes the basic substantive components. Others, including Berdahl (1971),

Table 2
A Checklist of Planning Considerations

Statement of goals:

- Educational
- Social
- Economic
- Individual

Quantification of the goals, to the extent possible

Analysis in terms of enrollment, resources, and programs of present postsecondary education in the state, including:

- Public and private colleges and universities
- Public and private trade and technical schools
- Present extent of use of new educational technologies
- Opportunities for adult training and education
- Geographic availability of institutions in the state

Projections for at least the short run (2 to 5 years) and the intermediate period (5 to 15 years), including:

- Enrollment trends categorized by institutional type and broadly defined programs
- State manpower needs
- Resource requirements--including faculty (area and level), physical facilities and equipment, libraries, and funding levels for operating and capital expenses

Consideration of present and potential arrangements with other states to maximize use of state resources

Extent of differentiation of function among types of institutions, and plans for bringing about desired changes in the pattern of differentiation

Analysis of the quality of existing programs and proposals for improvement

Analysis of the present degree of efficiency in use of educational resources and proposals for increasing efficiency

Definition of the state relation to private education, including descriptions of present and projected state aid to private education, if any

Analysis of existing requirements for admission and recommendations for any modifications if deemed advisable

Table 2, continued

Review of tuition levels at public institutions and, if any increases are projected, an analysis of the impacts of increased tuition on student financial aid requirements and enrollment at various types of institutions

Attention to the articulation of postsecondary education with secondary education, including consideration of advanced placement

Concern with the potential adaptability to changing educational needs of the system and the units within it

Evaluation of the adequacy of counseling for careers and for postsecondary education sufficiently early in a student's life to be effective and proposals for improving the programs if necessary

Identification of any other agencies outside postsecondary education which have major impacts on the way postsecondary education is able to function and suggestions for improving the interaction with these agencies

Source: Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, The Capitol and the Campus

Glenny (1971), Millett (1972), Palola (1970) and Scott (1973) have offered comprehensive and partial models based on theory and actual practices. The following characteristics are derived from these authors and from my own experience as a planner and consultant in three states.

1. Scope: should encompass all of postsecondary education including public and private, academic and vocational
2. Participation: the process should encourage participation of all external and internal constituencies including the general public by such mechanisms as informal consultation, public hearings, advisory committees, and questionnaires. Participation should begin with the solicitation of opinions regarding the issues to be taken up in the planning process. It should include opportunities for reaction to preliminary findings and recommendations.
3. Implementation: responsibility for implementation of each recommendation should be made explicit.
4. Information: the types of information which will be collected to monitor the implementation and success of the plan should be specified and responsibility for data collection should be established.
5. Amendment: provisions for revision should be incorporated in the plan.

6. Reevaluation: a specific time for systematic review of the plan should be established.
7. Integration: the relationship of the plan to the planning efforts of institutions and multi-campus systems should be explained.
8. Assumptions: principles and assumptions upon which the plan is based should be articulated, including assumptions about societal trends, educational trends and the learning process itself.
9. Future agenda: issues which surface in the planning process but are not dealt with in the plan should be listed.
10. Incentives: funding and administrative policies should be analyzed to assure that, at a minimum, they do not constitute disincentives to implementation of the plan; whenever possible, incentives for implementation should be provided.

This list is not exhaustive; it is offered along with the Carnegie checklist as a basis for evaluation of state planning efforts.

## Planning and Effectiveness

The theme of this paper has been that there is a need to develop criteria for evaluation of state boards and that there should be distinct conceptual frameworks for evaluating

structures and performance. The evaluation of performance is of great importance because many shortcomings of state systems and boards are not systemic. It was suggested that the outcomes and processes of planning are valid indicators of the ways boards are meeting and preparing to meet their responsibilities. While planning is no guarantee of effectiveness, the failure to plan, particularly in the 1970's and 1980's, may jeopardize the performance and credibility of state boards.

The ultimate purpose of evaluation is improved performance. One reason for focusing on planning as the initial step in evaluation is to stimulate greater interest and attention in planning. The neglect of state planning was noted in the studies conducted by Glenny in 1954 and Berdahl in 1971. More recently Glenny reported to the State Higher Education Executive Officers that state planning activity appears to have decreased in recent years. While the failure to plan may be barely tolerable in a period of growth, it is likely to be disastrous in the years ahead. As Clark Kerr has written,

> If change is inexorable and certain forms are more desirable than others, then change must be directed and managed rather than merely accepted and adapted to . . .
>
> If we can no longer plan for an age of expansion, an age of building, we can and must turn our energies for planning for an age of creative refinement in higher education's role, an age of intensive rather than extensive growth. (1964, pp. 5, 64)

The essence of planning is the attempt to assess the future and to begin to make decisions for dealing with it. These activities are desirable in any era but indispensable in our own.

Patrick M. Callan
December 16, 1974

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